EFL TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

Teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) need to improve their knowledge and practices continuously. They need to be involved in professional development programs (PDPs) which help them to remain updated with the new trends in teaching and learning. As their attitudes can influence their participation in PDPs, it is necessary to investigate their views towards these programs. This mixed method study examined the attitudes of EFL university teachers towards PDPs and the factors that affected their attitudes. The data were collected through questionnaire and interviews. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS, whereas the qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The results revealed that EFL teachers have positive attitudes towards programs. Furthermore, One-way ANOVA results showed that there were statistically significant differences in EFL teachers' attitudes towards PDPs based on their training years. Besides, Independent-samples T-test results revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in EFL teachers' attitudes towards PDPs based on their qualifications. According to the study results, it is recommended to evaluate teachers' attitudes after training programs to help improving these programs to meet their views and needs. Further research could be done using multiple data sources such as teachers' journal.

Contribution/Originality: This study contributes to the existing literature of PDPs at higher education level. It is one of the few studies that have investigated factors that might influence EFL teachers' attitudes towards PDPs. Identifying such factors will enable PDP designers to plan suitable programs that help improving EFL teachers' knowledge and skills.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Teachers need to be prepared well and continuously in order to keep their knowledge updated. For this purpose, they need to participate in professional development programs (PDPs) that keep them informed about changes in the educational system. Professional Development (PD) is defined as structured professional learning that changes teachers' practices and students' achievement (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). Thus, one of the most important aspects of PD is to have a positive effect on teachers by encouraging them to change their educational practices through enhancing their knowledge and skills, and then affect their students' learning positively (Inamorato, Gausas, Mackeviciute, Jotautyte, & Martinaitis, 2019).

The elements that affect teachers' practices in classrooms is their beliefs and attitudes towards PDPs. Targeting teachers to change their beliefs and attitudes is important to ensure that their classroom practices are ready to be changed according to what they have learned in such professional training programs (Altoeriqi, 2020;

Erdas, Dogan, Irez, Cakmakci, & Yalaki, 2019). If teachers have positive attitudes towards PDPs, they will transfer the knowledge and skills they acquire to classrooms and then improve their teaching practices and therefore students' outcomes. On the other hand, if they have negative attitudes towards these programs, they will ignore them and as a result no improvements will occur in their teaching practices (Tawalbeh, 2015). Hence, paying attention to teachers' attitudes regarding PDPs will contribute to continuous evaluation of such programs and an assessment of their role in changing teachers' practices.

According to Kirkpatrick's Evaluation Model of PDPs (Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006) four levels of data should be examined to assess the effectiveness of a PDP. These level are reactions, learning (knowledge, skill, attitudes), behaviour and results (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). Each level is relevant and will have an effect on the next level. The method becomes more complex and time-consuming as you pass from one stage to the next, but it also offers more useful knowledge (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006). A study by Erdas et al. (2019) was done to evaluate a continuous professional development (CPD) program in improving teachers' views, beliefs, and practices about Nature of Science (NOS), by using the "five level evaluation model". The findings demonstrated that the CPD program about NOS enhanced teachers' views about NOS, beliefs about teaching and learning the NOS, classroom practices about NOS and also their students' views about NOS.

Additionally, Evişen (2021) conducted a study that aimed to investigate in-service and pre-service teachers' perceptions of some professional development activities and to identify whether there were differences between these two groups regarding their attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions. The findings indicated that both groups of teacher's positive attitudes about professional development and professional development activities were eager to continue their learning via professional development. Furthermore, the findings of Mohammadi and Moradi (2017) demonstrated the change in teachers' beliefs about CPD after professional development workshops. The study found out that teacher showed positive attitudes towards the customized PDPs. This is in line with the results of Shi (2021) in which minority English teachers in middle school have a high positive attitude towards their professional development.

There are some variables that may affect teachers' attitudes towards PDPs. A study conducted by Taşdemir (2014) evaluated the teachers' attitudes towards in-service training according to their gender, their years of experience, and the number of in-service training they had participated in. It was revealed that the attitudes of teachers toward in-service training activities showed a significant difference between males and females, and between their years of experience. On the other hand, teachers' attitudes towards in-service training did not differ according to the number of training sessions they had earlier attended. Additionally, Torff and Sessions (2008) indicated that teaching experience was the best predictor of teachers' attitudes towards PD. In comparison to later years in teaching, the teachers' attitudes were significantly different in the first ten years. On the other hand, they found that gender and qualification were not related with attitudes about PD among all teachers. These two studies have thus agreed about the effect of teaching experiences on teachers' attitudes towards PDP, whereas they opposed each other pertaining to the influence of gender.

Due to the contradicted results of some studies regarding the teachers' attitudes towards PDPs and the factors that affect these attitudes, this mixed method study was envisaged. This study would be a contribution to the knowledge domain by investigating the EFL teachers' attitudes towards PDPs. The research questions framed for this study were:

1. How does participating in PDPs at Taif University English Language Center (TUELC) influence EFL teachers' attitudes towards PDPs?

2. Are there significant differences in teachers' attitudes towards PDPs corresponding to teachers' duration of participating in PDPs at TUELC?

3. Are there significant differences in teachers' attitudes towards PDPs corresponding to teachers' qualifications?

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Research Design

A mixed method research design was used in this study which means gathering, analyzing and combining both quantitative and qualitative data at some stages in the research process. The reason for mixing these two data types is to have adequate answer to the research questions because neither quantitative nor qualitative approaches could explain the results alone (Creswell & Clark, 2018).

The explanatory sequential design was utilized in the current study. It included two phases, first phase gathered quantitative data and then illustrated the quantitative results with the qualitative ones. For the quantitative phase of the study, a questionnaire was collected from EFL teachers at TUELC to investigate the EFL teachers' attitudes towards PDPs. Secondly, the qualitative phase used semi-structured interviews to help understand the quantitative findings.

2.2. Population and Sampling

The study population was EFL teachers at TUELC. The reason for selecting these teachers was that they were involved in the PDPs conducted at Taif University, Saudi Arabia (TU). They were 109 teachers from different countries and with multiple qualifications. Regarding the sampling for the quantitative section, the researcher surveyed all EFL teachers (N) 109, 87 teachers for the actual study, whereas 22 teachers were involved in the pilot study. This kind of sampling is called total population sampling. It is a type of purposive sampling method that involves surveying the whole population that have common characteristics regarding the phenomenon being studied (Laerd.com, 2020). The common characteristics of EFL teachers at TUELC were that they all taught English as a foreign language to the first-grade students at TU, and they were all involved in the PDP examined in this study.

In the qualitative phase of the study, the researcher used purposeful sampling which was a type of non-probability sampling method that allowed researchers to select participants intentionally (Creswell & Clark, 2018). As the explanatory sequential design aimed at explaining initial quantitative results, Creswell and Clark (2018) recommend that the participants for the qualitative follow-up phase should be a subgroup of participants who contributed to the quantitative data collection.

Thus, a more efficient way for directing the next sampling procedures was using the quantitative statistical outcomes to select the participants who were best able to explain the interested phenomenon (Creswell & Clark, 2018). This kind of purposeful sampling was called criterion sampling as mentioned by Palinkas et al. (2015). Thus, the researcher used this type of purposeful sampling to select the qualitative sample. The criteria for selecting the participants were determined after analyzing the quantitative data.

These criteria were: they should participate in PDPs two years and more, have teaching experience more than five years, and specialize in English language, TESL/TESOL, or Linguistics Studies. These criteria have been used to include teachers who can give more explanation based on their training years, years of experience, and their major. To keep the identity of the participants anonymous in the interview, the researcher coded them as T1, T2, T3 till T8.

For the size of the qualitative sample, it should be a much smaller sample than the initial quantitative sample (Creswell & Clark, 2018). For the interview data collection, according to the majority of articles and books that Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) reviewed, it was recommended that the purposive samples size needs to be established inductively, and sampling continues until reaching saturation. Saturation point is defined by Given (2016) as "additional data do not lead to any new emergent themes". So, the sample size for the interview was eight teachers as the researcher reached the point of saturation at teacher number eight.

2.3. Instruments

Two types of instruments were used for gathering the data of the current research. They were a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The questionnaire was distributed among EFL teachers at TUELC and it consisted of two sections. The first section dealt with the demographic information of the respondents which included course name, group number, nationality, qualification, teachers' major, their current position, the number of their teaching years, whether or not earned the Train the Trainer (TtT) certificate, and how long they have participated in PDPs at TUELC.

The second section of the questionnaire was used to answer the research question which tried to recognize how the participation in the PDPs at TUELC influenced EFL teachers' attitudes towards PDPs. This section was adapted from Çelen, Kösterelioğlu, and Akın Kösterelioğlu (2016) and permission was also sent by email from the Ümit Çelen, an assistant professor at Amasya University, Turkey. This section was developed to investigate teachers' attitudes towards in-service training (IST). The concept of IST was changed to PDPs to fit the current research as training is one of the PDPs that was investigated. It utilized a Likert-type scale with five responses (Strongly Disagree =1, Disagree =2, Neutral =3, Agree =4, Strongly Agree =5) and it contained 30 items of 15 positive and 15 negative.

In explanatory sequential design, the qualitative phase is called the follow-up data collection phase in which researchers decide which of the quantitative results needs further explanation during the qualitative data collection. Researchers are required to first analyze the quantitative results and see which ones are unclear or unexpected and needed further explanation (Creswell & Clark, 2018). Hence, in the qualitative phase of this study, a semi-structured interview was used to collect data from teachers after analyzing their responses to the questionnaires.

In order to conduct semi-structured interviews, the researcher prepared an interview guide with a list of topics to be explored, and a few open-ended questions. These questions should extract open responses from the participants (Brown & Danaher, 2019). This interview guide was written after analyzing the quantitative data as required by the explanatory sequential design of the study.

Online interview via Zoom meetings was utilized because of the pandemic situation. The duration of interviews was decided depending on participants' convenience. They were asked to read the interview guide and sign the consent form before the interview, and they could ask questions related to the research. The interview guide began with an explanation of the topic and participants were asked general questions such as their background (Liem, 2018). All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' permission and each interview session lasted for 30 to 45 minutes. Participants were asked to expand their answers to get more information and to clarify their opinions and feelings.

2.4. Data Analysis

The procedures of analyzing data in the explanatory sequential design took place in three stages: the quantitative data analysis, the follow-up qualitative data analysis, and the analysis of how the qualitative data helped to explain the quantitative data (Creswell & Clark, 2018). For the quantitative data analysis, Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) was used firstly to provide descriptive statistics on EFL teachers' attitudes. Mean and standard deviation for each statement in the questionnaire were calculated. One-way ANOVA was also performed to determine if there were statistically significant differences in EFL teachers' attitudes towards PDPs corresponding to differences in teachers' duration of participating in PDPs at TUELC. Additionally, Independent-samples T-test was conducted to discover whether there were statistically significant differences in teachers' attitudes towards PDPs corresponding to differences in their qualifications.

On the other hand, for the qualitative data analysis, thematic analysis was used because it provided rich, detailed, and complex data. Thematic analysis is defined as "a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is considered the most appropriate for any study that uses

interpretations. It allows the researcher to associate the theme frequency with the whole content (Alhojailan, 2012). Thematic analysis of qualitative research can be outlined in five steps: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). The first step which is compiling was done using otter.ai website to transcribe the interviews. Using otter.ai website makes the transcription process smoother. Besides that, the data are kept private and could be deleted whenever needed. The next four steps were conducted via Maxqda 2020 software which was used to organize the data to identify the common codes, themes, and concepts among the data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. EFL Teachers' Attitudes towards PDPs

To investigate EFL teachers' attitudes towards PDPs, teachers were asked to express their agreement or disagreement to the questionnaire items based on the five options of the Likert scale, Strongly Disagree= 1, Disagree= 2, Neutral= 3, Agree= 4, Strongly Agree=5. As this section of the teachers' questionnaire contained negative statements, the responses for these statements were reversed except the Neutral ones. It means that 1 was reversed to 5, 2 to 4, 5 to 1, and 4 to 2. Accordingly, the statements will be changed positively while interpreting the results. E.g., the statement "I want the PDPs to end quickly." has a negative meaning. So, it will be changed to "I don't want the PDPs to end quickly." which indicates a positive meaning. The inverse statements were starred as shown in Table 2.

The data was interpreted by three levels based on the range as shown in Table 1. These levels were derived by subtracting the highest scale to the lowest scale; (5-1) =4. Then, dividing the result; 4 to the number of levels which is 3; 4/3=1.33. So, 1.33 was the interval length by which the lower and upper limits were decided. Therefore, the higher the mean value, the greater was the agreement level.

Table-1. Mean Range Levels.

Scale		Interval Lengeth	Lower Limit	Upper Limit	Range	Level
Strongly Disagree	1	1.33	1.00	2.33	1.00 - 2.33	Low
Disagree	2					
Neutral	3	1.33	2.34	3.67	2.34 - 3.67	Moderate
Agree	4	1.33	3.68	5.00	3.68 − 5.00	High
Strongly Agree	5					

The quantitative data were run through descriptive statistical analysis on SPSS and the mean and standard deviation were generated for each item of section three in the teachers' questionnaire. This section was directed for collecting data regarding teachers' attitudes towards PDPs. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 illustrates that the mean scores for all items ranged between 3.63 and 4.38. This range was in the moderate and high level of agreement. The item that received the highest mean was Item 18 with a mean score of 4.38. Item 18 states that "PDPs are necessary." after reversing it. This finding shows that teachers agree with this statement, which means that they agree that attending PDPs are necessary for them.

This has also been mentioned by the teachers during the interviews when they were asked about PDPs as follows:

"I think they are necessary and enjoyable; they add to my experience and my knowledge. So, I hope this program will continue." (Attitudes> Description of PDPs >T1).

"I am so pleased with the professional development programs. I really learned a lot through these programs. They are very important to every teacher, and I feel like I'm getting more and more professional every year." (Attitudes > Description of PDPs>T3).

"They are important and helpful especially the one that done by more experienced trainers like Cambridge or National Geography trainers when they attend and train us. Their sessions are very enjoyable and beneficial." (Attitudes > Description of PDPs>T8).

Table-2. Mean and Standard Deviation for the Items of EFL Teachers' Attitudes towards PDPs.

No.	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I would participate in PDPs voluntarily.	3.92	0.979
2	I do not want the PDPs to end quickly.*	3.69	1.018
3	PDPs are integral part in teaching profession.	4.36	0.664
4	Participating in PDPs increases my motivation at work.	4.20	0.926
5	I am interested in the topics discussed in PDPs.	4.10	0.903
6	I would not cancel PDPs if I was given the authority.*	4.05	0.999
7	I find most PDPs activities not to be boring.*	3.70	0.916
8	I would participate in PDPs even if it is not mandatory.*	3.63	1.231
9	I believe that PDPs can add value to my knowledge and skills.*	4.16	0.951
10	I feel comfortable in PDPs.*	4.10	0.940
11	PDPs help me completing my shortcomings related to pre-service training.	3.79	0.954
12	I am interested in PDPs.*	3.99	1.156
13	If I had the opportunity, I would definitely participate in more PDPs.	3.82	1.051
14	I feel lucky when I participate in PDPs.	4.03	0.869
15	Participating in PDPs is important for my personal and professional development.	4.31	0.919
16	Gaining a certificate of participation in PDPs session is not more important than gaining knowledge and skills.*	4.11	1.039
17	I want to participate in PDPs.*	4.20	0.847
18	PDPs are necessary.*	4.38	0.751
19	I am eager to apply the knowledge I gain in PDPs at my classroom.	4.23	0.898
20	PDPs help me to keep up to date with the educational developments.	4.30	0.864
	Overall Mean and Standard Deviation	4.05	0.624

Note: *Invers items.

The excerpts above show teachers' attitudes towards PDPs and how they describe them. They mentioned that PDPs were necessary for all teachers to add to their knowledge and experience. T8 added that they were important and helpful especially when the trainers were well known because they had the skills of training and teachers enjoyed the sessions with them and got more benefit. This finding is in line with Önalan and Gürsoy (2020) in which the participants had shown moderately high agreement on voluntary participation of in-service training because they thought that training was necessary for teachers' professional development. In another study of Evişen (2021), the in-service teachers stated that professional development was necessary as long as they were doing their job. They described it as an ongoing, lifelong process. Based on one of the assumptions of adult learning theory, adults' approach to learning was life-centered which meant they learnt things that would help them complete tasks or deal with issues they confronted in their lives (Knowles, Holton III, & Swanson, 2014).

On the other hand, the item that had the lowest mean was Item 8 with a mean score of 3.63. It stated that "I would participate in PDPs even if it is not mandatory." after reversing it. This result shows that teachers agree with this statement, which means that they will participate in PDPs even if the attending is optional for them to attend or not. This shows their high motivation to be involved in such programs. The reasons behind this could be explained based on T1, T6, and T8's expressions during the interview. The teachers' responses have been recorded as follows.

"Actually, sometimes we were asked to attend only one training session out of five, but for me, I'd rather attend three or four or maybe all the five because I like to hear from other teachers. So, for sure, I'll get something from them." (Motivation for attending PDPs > Way of learning> T1).

"Well, if the title of the topic will attract me. Maybe it will tackle something I really need to learn about. E.g., those technological things, I'm not really a fan of it. So, sometimes, a title of a session about technology will attract my

attention, I would love to learn. So yes, I will be motivated to go in and see what's happening. Maybe I'll learn something new, which would benefit me and my students." (Motivation for attending PDPs > Topic> T6)

"Yes, sometimes for the names of trainers that I know if I attend their classes, I will have more information. I will be enjoyed, and I will get benefit." (Motivation for attending PDPs > Trainers> T8).

The excerpts above explain why teachers have the desire to attend the training sessions of PDPs. T1 claims that joining PDPs allows her to learn and get benefit from what will be presented. So, she is motivated to attend not only one session as being asked, but she would rather attend three or four or even all sessions. T6 states that the motivation to join the training sessions depends on the topic of the sessions. For instance, if the session's title is about something attractive to her such as technology, she will definitely attend it to learn what she really needs. Furthermore, T8 adds that trainers' names of the training sessions being presented play a role in motivating her to attend these sessions. Some trainers are skilled in making the training programs more attractive, enjoyable, and beneficial. Thus, based on teachers' expressions, motivation is a necessary factor for them in order to attend PDPs. Qian, Hambrusch, Yadav, and Gretter (2018) mentioned that if PDP designers succeeded in increasing teachers' motivation, this would definitely enhance teacher engagement and learning.

Referring back to Table 2, it is evident that the overall mean score obtained was 4.05 which indicates a high level of agreement to the questionnaire items. This reading shows that EFL teachers have positive attitudes towards PDPs. This finding is also supported by the findings from the interview as all the eight teachers expressed that their attitudes towards PDPs at TUELC changed from almost negative to some positive ones.

T4 expressed her attitude as follows:

"At the beginning my attitude was negative. PDPs sessions were overloaded work for me at the beginning, especially when I was chosen sometimes to give a presentation in a workshop or even when it was obligatory to attend workshops. However, later on actually my attitude changed completely to be positive because I started to enjoy the sessions. I also noticed how much benefit I got and how many skills I am really learning and developing as a teacher. So now yes, I believe that when I have access to continuous learning opportunities, and to professional development resources, I am better equipped to become a better teacher, especially if my students have learning needs, or performing below or above the grade level. So, I need to learn how to deal with these cases. Professional development sessions help us to do that, and to know the correct way to deal with such students." (Attitudes Change> From Negative to Positive>T4)

Another teacher elaborated on this issue as follows:

"Definitely, definitely my attitude toward PDP is changed completely, from negative to positive because of many reasons. One of the reasons is the good organization of these PDPs. This gives them the impression of professionalism, the time management, the layout, all organizations of PDPs from A to Z were amazing. Another reason is related to the topics discussed that touch learners' and teachers' needs. Reason number three is the collaboration with a very respected university which is University of Cambridge. They have expertise and very respectful speakers in some webinars and symposium. Also, the launching of TTT programs under the supervision of Cambridge press, it is very effective program, and all the trainers are great. They provide very important and good training topics." (Attitudes Change> From Negative to Positive>T5)

Hence, the excerpts above show that teachers had negative attitudes at the beginning of PDPs because they were not well organized, and they considered themselves overloaded with work. However, these attitudes were later changed to positives ones. T5 stated some reasons for this change. Firstly, the organization and the time management of these programs. She mentioned that the layout of PDPs was amazing and gave the training programs more professionalism. She also added the topics choice were related to teachers' and learners' needs. Finally, she stated that collaboration with a respectful university like Cambridge University had also affected their attitude towards the training programs positively as these universities had very skilled and experienced trainers. All these factors motivated teachers to participate in such programs and gain more knowledge and skills.

Finally, it could be concluded that the teachers' positive attitudes towards PDPs improved their learning through the training programs attended and which transferred to their classroom successfully. Guskey (2002) stated that teachers' belief of professional development increases their knowledge and skills which contribute to their development, and therefore enhances their students' learning. Furthermore, according to Kirkpatrick's evaluation model, the success of a program is dependent on positive reaction, and if participants do not respond positively, they are unlikely to be motivated to learn (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006).

3.2. Comparison of Teachers' Attitudes According to their Duration of Participating in PDPs

In order to determine if there were statistically significant differences in EFL teachers' attitudes towards PDPs corresponding to differences in teachers' duration of participating in PDPs at TUELC, One-way ANOVA was performed to compare means among three different groups of teachers (see Table 3). The researcher grouped the teachers by their participation duration in PDPs: Never, One year and less, and two years and more.

Table-3. One-way ANOVA Results According to Teachers' Participation in PDPs.

Duration	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.	Decision
Never	16	3.6750	0.66182	3.788		
1-2 years	47	4.1149	0.59298			
More than two years	24	4.1667	0.59026		0.027	Significant
Total	87	4.0483	0.62443			

Table 3 presents the One-way ANOVA results for teachers' attitudes according to their participation in PDPs. As the table shows, there are statistically significant differences in EFL teachers' attitudes towards PDPs ($P<0.05$) in favor of those who have attended PDPs for more than two years with a mean score of 4.1667. This indicates that teachers who attended the PDPs for more than two years have positive attitudes more than those who have never joined the PDPs with a high mean difference of 04917, and likewise more than those who have attended the PDPs for 1-2 years with a slight mean difference of 0.0518. This finding confirms the fact that teachers' attitudes change after participation in PDPs at TUELC. Mohammadi and Moradi (2017) demonstrated that teachers' attitudes about professional development can change in such conditions. The study found that the teachers showed a high level of acceptance regarding the customized PDPs after attending the PD workshops.

On the other hand, this finding contradicts the results of the study conducted by Taşdemir (2014). It was revealed that teachers' attitudes towards in-service training did not change according to the number of training sessions they had attended before. The researcher argued that the absence of change in attitudes between instructors who participated in these activities and those who did not was attributed to their forced involvement in the activities, or to a lack of meaningful benefit from previous training courses.

3.3. Comparison of Teachers' Attitudes According to their Qualifications

Teachers were divided into two groups according to their qualifications, Bachelor's holders and Postgraduates. In order to discover whether there were statistically significant differences in teachers' attitudes towards PDPs corresponding to differences in their qualifications, Independent-samples T-test was conducted. First, means and standard deviation for both groups were tabulated. Table 4 shows the results of the tabulation.

Table-4. Comparison of Means and Standard Deviations of Teachers According to their Qualifications.

	Qualification	N	Mean	Mean Difference	Std. Deviation
EFL Teachers' Attitude	Postgraduates	53	4.0557	0.01890	0.63114
	Bachelor's	34	4.0368		0.62308

Table 4 shows the means and standard deviation of teachers' attitude for both groups. The results reveal that the mean score of postgraduates is higher than bachelor's holders with a mean difference of .01890. This means that the positive attitudes of teachers with masters and PhD is little higher than bachelor's degree holders.

Next, in order to determine whether the mean differences between both groups are significant or not, Independent-samples T-test was run. Table 5 presents the data from the T-test.

Table-5. Independent-samples T-test Results According to Teachers' Qualification.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Teachers Attitude	0.001	0.981	0.137	85	0.891	0.0189	0.13799	-0.25547	0.29326

According to Table 5, there is no significant difference between postgraduates' and bachelor's holders teachers; t(85)=0.137, p=0.891, in their attitudes towards PDPs. It means that both groups have positive attitudes with a difference of mean value that is negligible. This finding reveals that all teachers regardless of their qualifications look at PDPs as an integral part of their professionalism. They are all aware of the importance of PDPs in their profession as EFL teachers. The positive attitude of EFL teachers towards PDPs reflects their acceptance towards professional development as indicated by Ekawati, Mulyono, Arrummaiza, Zulaiha, and Ningsih (2021). Furthermore, this result illustrates that although teachers hold higher degrees, they are still interested in attending PDPs. This means that they believe that ongoing learning will improve their knowledge and teaching practices. Assalahi (2021) mentioned that EFL teachers engaged in PD because they deeply believed it updated their knowledge and teaching skills, and addressed their personal, professional, and institutional requirements.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed to investigate the attitudes of EFL university teachers towards PDPs and the factors that may affect these attitudes. The results showed that EFL teachers perceived PDPs as an opportunity for self-improvement as they expressed their positive towards these programs. It could also be concluded that the more they attended PDPs, the higher acceptance of these programs they would have. Finally, the results revealed that teachers' qualification have no effect on EFL teachers' towards PDPs. These findings attempt to fill a gap in knowledge related to professional development field.

Since it was found that PDP was positively received by teachers as having an effect on improving their practices in the classroom, it is suggested that PDPs should be a component of a teacher's professional life. Universities should encourage teachers to attend these programs by motivating them through rewards and certificates. They should also determine if annual PDPs are sufficient to meet the teachers' needs in improving their knowledge, attitudes, and skills and in turn the academic performance of their students. Thus, it is necessary to have an evaluation model of PDPs that include all the components of the programs' beneficiaries such as Kirkpatrick's evaluation model on which this study was based. By following this path, it will enable the universities and PDPs designer to enhance the positive sides of these programs and modify the negative ones. It will work as a source of rich data to guide the professional development plan.

Professional development is a deeply forked topic that has many aspects which need to be investigated. Since this study employed a mixed method research design using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, it is a good idea to conduct future studies on this topic using different research methods such as case study or teacher's narrative inquiry and include multiple data sources such as teachers' journal reflection and field notes from observations. Such research would produce more comprehensive and extensive data sets that would better explain

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the study's findings. The influence of PDPs on teachers' attitudes and practices was focused on in this study. It is suggested that future studies could focus on other factors that could be influenced by PDPs. For instance, investigating the influence of PDPs on teachers' self-readiness to sustainable learning.

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